

SOCIAL ATTITUDES OF KOREA'S NEW MIDDLE CLASS: FOCUSING ON THE WHITE COLLAR WORKERS OF BIG COMPANIES

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This paper aims to clarify the confusion in the interpretation of social attitudes of the new middle class in Korea. Previous studies are not only limited in perspectives but they are confined to a narrow scope of political issues in a given period. Especially, the argument that the attitudes of the new middle class have a progressive character has misunderstood the complex and contradictory structure of their consciousness. This paper will question the validity of the thesis that the new middle class is among one of the most progressive social forces in Korea. The empirical studies on the middle class so far have exaggerated its progressive character. Rather, a multi-dimensional cleavage structure has been observed: social attitudes of the new middle class are dualistic, selective, discontinuous, and even contradictory.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern industrial society, the new middle class (NMC) has always been at the center of sociological debate. The socio-political role of the new middle class was regarded as critically important especially when a social system was in the process of abruptive changes. Sociologists in Korea also have active debates on the role of the NMC, undergoing democratization and rapid social changes (Han 1989, 1991; Hong 1989; KDI 1991).

However, the conclusions so far have some limitations which stem from the narrow outlook and misinterpretation of the NMC's social attitudes. Previous studies leave much to be done for a comprehensive understanding of the character of the NMC's social consciousness. The main arguments of this paper are as follows.

First, previous studies do not provide us with comprehensive information on the social attitudes of the NMC. Not only are they limited in perspectives but they are confined to a narrow scope of political issues in a given period. Second, the argument that NMCs have a progressive social attitudes has

masked the complex and contradictory structure of their consciousness. It is due to the over-generalization of fragmentary survey results. Therefore, those theses championing the NMC-centered reform movement, which derive legitimacy from the progressiveness of the NMC, stand on a fragile empirical basis. Rather a multi-dimensional cleavage structure can be found: the members of the NMC show wide discrepancies in terms of social attitudes and this is one of the most important reasons why the NMC cannot be regarded as a homogeneous social force. Third, social attitudes of the NMC are dualistic, selective, discontinuous, and even contradictory. Their progressive orientation seems to be confined to limited political issues. Even the issues themselves are contingent on unpredictable circumstances. On such issues as school education, everyday life, traditional values, sex roles, and other domains of attitudes the NMCs are rather conservative. But the studies so far tend to presume their social attitudes as consistent and continuous at all levels. I reevaluate the progressiveness based thesis by using recent survey results on the NMC in Korea.

A BRIEF REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Previous studies on the attitudes of the NMC can be classified into two categories: the 'conservativeness hypothesis' and the 'progressiveness hypothesis'. First, let me evaluate on the conservativeness (Choi 1985; Kim and Cho 1985). These studies emphasize the NMC's conservatism and opportunism under pivotal historical conditions. They especially focus on the relationship between the NMC and the working class. Of course wide theoretical differences between them can be found (Park and Cho 1991). But, such kind of studies generally lack reliable empirical data to support their arguments.

Second, as for the progressiveness, those theses highlight the NMC's progressive and critical attitudes against authoritarianism. They argue that the NMC in Korea has always wanted to reform the existing social and political system (The Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University, 1987; You 1988; Han 1991; Kim 1991).

The first statistical survey which attempted to test the progressiveness hypothesis was conducted by the Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University in 1987 (the 1987 SNU Survey). The main argument of this survey is as follows. The NMC in Korea is a highly educated class, maintaining a stable economic and social status. Despite stability and high status, the NMC has been a driving force behind the democratization of Korea. They have served as a moral as well as critical opinion leader, and they have strongly supported radical reforms of society. They have also frequently associated

themselves with workers and farmers. In a word, the NMC in Korea is a champion of 'democratic zeal' (The Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University 1987). Similar surveys around 1987-1988 repeated the same arguments.¹ Han (1989) integrated the hypotheses into his own version called '*jungmin* theory'. He has advanced his theory of social reform which places the NMC at the center of gravity. Combining former surveys and his own data, he envisages a middle class centered social reform movement (Han 1991).

I have briefly examined the two different arguments about social attitudes of the NMC. However, the arguments of previous studies are confusing in that each argument stands on different bases. While the 'progressiveness' supporters try to base their propositions on the results of opinion surveys, their counterparts have emphasized that social and historical conditions have forced the NMC to be conservative and opportunistic. Such differences in levels of analysis and methodology have made it difficult to attain productive results. In addition, the aforementioned studies are confined to the analysis of the NMC's political attitudes during a limited time period around 1987 (Lee 1990; Kim 1991).

Therefore, to overcome such problems, a more refined analysis of the core of the NMC's social attitudes is needed. In this study, the core of the NMC as an occupational group is the urban salary men called 'white collar' who are employed in big corporations. So, to analyze the characteristics of their consciousness more clearly, it is essential to identify the core group's characteristics.²

DATA

The data of this study are from the survey of the 'managerial and clerical salary men' who are employed in large firms in the Seoul metropolitan area. The survey was conducted during the period of April 1 through 15, 1992. All 1,032 cases were obtained. The top ladder of population covers company managerial levels, and the bottom ladder covers high school graduates. Among respondents, women comprised 16.1%, and mean age was 32.4 years. Twenty six percent were high school graduates, 7% were junior college graduates, and 67% were university graduates. The mean of monthly income

¹Surveys around 1987 even predicted the possibility of a 'middle class revolution' in Korea.

²With regard to definitional problem of the NMC, the most important empirical index is occupation. Also, it is possible to use 'life styles' or 'life chances' in the definition of the NMC. But such concepts cannot be converted into a reliable empirical index. Therefore, I have decided to grasp the core of the NMC with the help of the occupational index.

was 1.38 million won.

Here, I will add some additional comments on the concept of the NMC. Various definitions may be possible about the NMC.³ To remove ambiguity I will limit my discussion to the core of the NMC which, to other researchers, is equivalent to the NMC. In this perspective, the representative occupational group which comprises the greatest portion of the NMC is urban managerial and clerical employees who work for big corporations. I used occupation and employment status as a standard for definition of the NMC. So, the population was limited to white collar workers who are employed by big firms around the Seoul area. They share common characteristics in their employment stability and relatively higher educational level. More specifically, the subjects of this research are employees at the private sector, or 'white collar workers'.⁴

Before discussing the results of analysis, it is necessary to define some key concepts and models. Although the "*jungmin* theory" by Han (1991) contains some serious flaws, the same model is used in this study in order to test the validity of the theory.⁵ In his study Han classified groups of people according to their subjective class consciousness. The classification criteria were derived from two questions on respondents' subjective class identification. One question is whether or not respondents belong to the 'middle class'. The other is whether or not they belong to the *minjung*. By cross-tabulating the results

³It is possible to use various standards in defining the middle class. Frequently used criteria are economic, social, and subjective consciousness. In the case of the economic standard, income level or house ownership was used. As a social standard, educational level or occupational status was used. And, as subjective consciousness, class identification was used. For more information, see KDI (1991).

⁴For two reasons I decided to limit the scope of this study to the NMC. First, in employment status, they are dependent on 'salary' not 'wage' and they are employees. Second, they are distinguished from labor workers in their 'social status.' They share similar social consciousness and life style. In that sense, they are called 'white collar' or the 'new middle class.' In the Weberian stratification theory, the second aspect was emphasized. In the orthodox Marxian approach, a greater importance was placed on the first aspect. However, a one-sided approach can have limitations. In this study, I will use the concept 'new middle class' as a composite of both economic class and status group. On the characteristics of the white collar category, see Kocka (1980).

⁵There are some problems in such classifications. The most important one is the fact that too many respondents indicated that they 'don't know' which category they belonged to. About the question of middle class belongingness, 11.2% of respondents said they 'don't know' whether they belong to the middle class or not. Furthermore, in the question of *minjung* identification, as high as 20.3% responded 'don't know'.

In the previous studies, such problems also existed. It should be pointed out that the questions have serious flaws. However, I have used the same question format in order to test the validity of Han's thesis. About the problems related with the questions, see Hong (1989).

of two questions, Han obtained four types of class identification. By analyzing different social attitudes among four groups Han derived empirical bases supporting the progressiveness hypothesis. Here I will examine such a hypothesis by adopting basically the same procedure.

Table 1 is the cross tabulation of four types of subjective class identification. In the table, the first question is whether or not respondents belong to the middle class. The second is whether or not respondents belong to the *minjung*. The two questions are about respondents' subjective class identification. Respondents can be categorized into four groups according to subjective class identification. The four types are the results of a cross-table between two questions.

TABLE 1. FOUR TYPES OF SUBJECTIVE CLASS IDENTIFICATION

(N = 750; Unit = %)

		Do you think you belong to the middle class?	
		Yes	No
Do you think you belong to the <i>minjung</i> in our society?	Yes	<i>Jungmin</i> (23.3%)	<i>Minjung</i> (35.3%)
	No	Middle Class (17.7%)	None (23.6%)

In Table 1, respondents who indicated that they belong to the middle class, and do not belong to the *minjung* are classified as subjectively belonging to the middle class (MC). They occupy 17.7% of total cases analyzed. And the respondents who have both the middle class and the *minjung* identification are classified as *jungmin* (JM). All 23.3% of respondents belong to that category. In the same procedure, Those respondents who belong to the *minjung* and who do not belong to the middle class are classified as *minjung* (MJ). They compose 35.3% of respondents. Finally, those who did not identify with any class category are classified as 'None' (NN). They occupy 23.6% of respondents. By classifying four types of subjective class identification, I tried to analyze differences of social attitudes among them.

Here the concept of *minjung* needs further explanation since the term originates and is widely used in Korea. *Minjung* is defined as an alliance of grass roots, which plays the role of counterbalance against authoritarian rule. In Korea, the term has referred to the popular resistance against dictatorship. When people talk about the *minjung* they mean deprivation and resistance.

“People” in a Western sense is similar. *Jungmin* is defined as a group of people who subjectively think they belong to both the middle class and the *minjung*.

ANALYSIS OF ATTITUDES

Six domains of attitudes were examined. They include self-image, political attitude, labor issues, capitalism and the political system, education/tradition /sex roles, company life. Differences of attitudes among four groups are analysed. However, the definition of ‘progressive’ and ‘conservative’ are extremely contingent on context. Henceforth, by ‘conservative’ I mean a set of political, economic, religious, educational, and social values characterized by emphasis on the status quo and social stability, resistant to change, and by ‘progressive’ I mean the opposite (Kerlinger 1984).

Self-image of the New Middle Class

The NMC’s dualistic attitude can be identified by examining their self-images. Three domains of self-image were considered: including the NMC’s contribution for social development, the NMC and democratization, and the NMC’s selfishness were analyzed.⁶

Table 2 is a brief comparison of the respondents’ evaluation score of self-

TABLE 2. COMPARISON OF THE NMC’S SELF-IMAGE (N = 750)

Items compared	MC	JM	NN	MJ	Average	F.	Sig.
Evaluation about the NMC’s contribution for social development	54	59	29	26	39	21.3111	0.00
Evaluation about the NMC’s leading role in the democratization	42	49	21	12	28	21.3707	0.00
Evaluation about the NMC’s indifference to have-nots	-3	-10	22	23	10	17.7451	0.00

* The score ranges from the lowest -100 to the highest 100. Scores above 0 mean that the respondents’ attitudes may be regarded as positive on the respective questions.

⁶Questions are as follows:

“NMCs have contributed greatly for the development of our society.”

“NMCs have played a leading role in democratization.”

“NMCs are indifferent to the claims of have-nots.”

image according to four types of class identification consciousness. The F-score is significant at the $p < .01$ level. The questions are composed of a 5 score scale which ranges from lowest -100 to highest $+100$. Average self-image scores range from -100 to $+100$.

An interesting finding is that members of the NMC think of themselves as contributing to social development and regard themselves as playing a central role in the democratization process. But they also tend to be indifferent and selfish to the needs of 'have-nots'. They acknowledge that even though they are critical of society and politics, they are reluctant to take action. In short, they confess they are contradictory and dualistic, having a Janusarian character. This is the reason why it is inappropriate to make a dichotomous judgment of the NMC's attitude as progressive or conservative.⁷

In terms of class identification consciousness, there are clear differences among groups. That is, while the MC group's self-image is most positive about the NMC, that of the MJ group is most negative. The more important implication of the data in Table 2 is the self-image of the so-called JM group. Han (1991) insisted in his '*jungmin* theory' that "people who have *jungmin* identification basically have *minjung* orientation. And they have a strong inclination for reform in solidarity with *minjung* (Han 1991)."

TABLE 3. COMPARISON OF THE NMC'S POLITICAL ATTITUDE

(N = 750)

Items compared	MC	JM	NN	MJ	Average	F.	Sig.
Respondents' self-appraisal of political progressiveness	-6	10	1	18	8	11.9546	0.00
Attitude about methods of social reform	6	6	9	21	12	10.0344	0.00

* The score ranges from the lowest -100 to the highest 100 . Scores above 0 mean that respondents' attitudes may be regarded as politically progressive and reform-oriented.

But when we take a closer look at the findings on the JM's self-image, JM group is more closer to the MC than to the MJ. Furthermore, the JM group seems to be moving toward the MC track. In sum, they are 'transitory'. They are in the process of being integrated into the framework of existing socio-

⁷Such patterns can be identified also in the 1987 survey. Although the survey asked the same question, the final report did not mention the negative aspects of the NMC. The survey interpreted the NMC's progressive aspects too highly (The Institute of Social Sciences, Seoul National University 1987).

political systems. There exists no credible evidence that they favor a radical change in alliance with the MJ. From the self-images of the JM, it would rather be a more accurate interpretation that the JM group is located at some point of metamorphosis process toward the MC and they do not want to share solidarity with the MJ.

Such results make us raise a serious question against the thesis that "the NMC in Korea is a progressive social force and a firm alliance between the MJ and the JM is not only possible, but also the JM can be a center of social reform (Han 1991)." Previous studies on the middle class went too far in emphasizing the NMC's progressive character.

Political Attitude

Previous studies have highlighted the NMC's critical and progressive attitude toward politics. In this study, I analyze two items of political attitude.⁸

First, in political attitudes, the NMCs are relatively progressive. But the MC group shows a notable conservativeness compared with other groups. This observation confirms the findings of other studies (Han 1981; The Institute of Social Science, Seoul National University 1987). The scores of political progressiveness are high along the rank order of MJ > JM > NN > MC.

The NMCs generally prefer moderate reform. However, differences among groups are also found. Reformistic orientations are strongest among the MJ members. But differences among other groups are negligible. In this case, the JM group again shows closer political attitude to the MC rather than the MJ, thus making their political identity ambiguous.

The reformistic characters are strong, in the order of MJ > NN > JM > MC. Here again only the MJ shows consistently progressive political identity. The MC group is the most conservative in political terms. In contrast, the JM group appears very ambiguous. The JM does not have any distinct political identity.

Such analysis offers an important question about the JM group's political attitude. According to this analysis, the JM group does not have any distinctive political attitude. At least they show more affinity with MC rather than MJ. The model of social reform which places the JM as the central initiator of class alliance is in reality derived from a ambiguous interpretation. Only one thing is clear that the MC is different from the MJ. That is, while the MC group is politically more conservative and prefers a very gradual social

⁸The following questions were asked:

"What kind of political orientation do you have?"

"What do you think is more desirable to bridge the gap between 'haves' and 'have-nots'."

change, the MJ group wants just the opposite.

Labor Issues

The NMC studies emphasize that Korea's NMCs strongly sympathize with labor workers' demands for 'the right to live'. This study looked at the NMC's attitude about labor issues.⁹

The results of this survey also show the NMC's sympathy with the workers' right for strike and unionization. But their attitude needs a presupposition that the workers' movement must be confined within 'economic unionism'. Their sympathy with unionism is selective. No reliable evidence exists that they approve of militant and political unionism. They do not even want industrial unrest due to militant unionism. Rather, they view industrial relations as basically cooperative.¹⁰

The NMC's appraisal of labor issue shows a wide gap. In Table 4 a striking contrast between the MC and other categories can be observed. Once again the MC's conservativeness is confirmed.

TABLE 4. COMPARISON OF THE NMC'S ATTITUDE ABOUT LABOR ISSUES

(N = 750)

Items compared	MC	JM	NN	MJ	Average	F.	Sig.
Protection of workers' right for strike	19	42	23	48	35	16.9938	0.00
Need for a trade union	48	68	59	75	65	15.8281	0.00

* The score ranges from the lowest - 100 to the highest 100. Scores above 0 mean that respondents' attitudes may be regarded as positive about respective items.

⁹Following questions were asked:

"The workers' right for strike must be protected."

"How far do you think the labor union is needed in order to represent workers' interests?"

¹⁰According to the survey, 38.6% of the NMC respondents agree with the regulation of the labor movement by the government. On the other hand, 31.4% opposed government regulation. The percentage of approval of government regulation is more than the opposing attitude. In comparison with the results of previous surveys this finding is somewhat surprising. Because previous surveys reported the NMC members are almost always on the workers' side in labor issues. This survey pictures a different climate. NMC members appears to be negative about any militant labor movement. In addition, it is certain that the NMC sympathizes with the necessity of the union itself. But members believe that a labor movement must be along the lines of 'practical and economic' unionism. For a more detailed information of the NMC on labor movement, see Park (1992).

Capitalism and the Political System

Then, how does the NMC regard the free market and the political system? Table 5 is a result of an ANOVA analysis about the free market system and the character of state.¹¹

Through the NMC's evaluation of the political-economic system, we can understand the NMCs are strong supporters of the free market system and

TABLE 5. COMPARISON OF THE NMC'S ATTITUDE ABOUT POLITICAL-ECONOMIC SYSTEM (N = 750)

Items compared	MC	JM	NN	MJ	Average	F.	Sig.
Attitude about free competition	66	57	52	59	58	2.7613	0.04
Attitude about the need for minimum state power	34	40	33	48	40	4.8876	0.00

* The score ranges from the lowest -100 to the highest 100. Scores above 0 mean that respondents' attitudes may be regarded as positive about respective items.

minimum state power. This suggests that the principle of the free market system is firmly rooted in the NMC's mind. Therefore, their reformistic character do not go beyond 'basic right for liberty'. It is unimaginable that the Korean NMC dares to cross that threshold.¹² Statistical comparison shows that the MC group scores highest in free competition, while the MJ scores highest in the concept of minimum state power. The reason for the MJ's strong support for minimum state power may be that they are most critical of authoritarian government.

Education, Tradition and Sex Roles

Studies on the NMC's attitude have tilted toward socio-political aspects with political opinion survey accounting for a part of the whole picture. However, everyday life aspects, including education, sex roles, tradition and so on, which all assume equal importance, have been neglected. But progressiveness in politics does not always represent progressiveness in other values

¹¹Questions are as follows:

"Our economic system must be based on the principle of free competition."

"People can enjoy freedom when the state power is minimum."

¹²For the character of the Korean NMC's social movement, see Han (1992).

(Kerlinger 1984; Choi *et al.* 1991). Sometimes, the opposite may be true. Especially, while political attitudes are very 'sensitive' and 'volatile' to the political situation, the value system of everyday life remains a relatively consistent and enduring structure. If such a presupposition is acceptable, it is possible that the enduring, long term, and underlying structure of the NMC's mind set orientation may not have any connection with its political attitudes.

To explore the problem more closely, I analysed the NMC's views of education, traditional ethics, and sex roles. Table 6 shows the results of an ANOVA analysis of such aspects. The differences of mean scores among the

TABLE 6. COMPARISON OF THE NMC'S ATTITUDE ABOUT EDUCATION, TRADITION, AND SEX ROLES
(N = 750)

Items compared	MC	JM	NN	MJ	Average	F.	Sig.
Attitudes about the need for discipline in school	49	38	47	34	40	3.4709	0.02
Attitude about the traditional ethic	24	13	17	14	16	1.5456	0.20
Attitude about the traditional sex roles	5	-11	7	-1	-5	3.2460	0.02

* The score ranges from the lowest -100 to the highest 100. Scores above 0 mean that respondents prefer discipline in education, traditional ethic and traditional sex roles.

NMC members on education and sex roles are statistically significant at the .05 level, while those on tradition are not.¹³ But, in comparison with aforementioned analysis, the difference within groups are not so distinguishable, and in some cases not statistically significant.

First, consider the NMC's attitude about education. Table 6 shows that the NMC members evidently prefer discipline and hard training in family and school. Same tendencies can be found in the NMC's appraisal of traditional values. The NMC's responses about traditional ethics are not only positive, but differences between groups are not significant. In all items, the MC group consistently shows a relatively conservative orientation.

What do these results mean? It may reflect that even though NMC members are politically progressive and critical, they want to conserve the tradi-

¹³Questions are as follows:

"We need discipline in family and school education."

"Confucian traditional ethics contributed much to social development."

"Man must be devoted to his company, and woman must be devoted to her home."

tional value system in everyday life. In everyday life their way of thinking is not influenced by their class identification.¹⁴ Compared with the analysis of political attitudes, the NMC on the one hand advocates political reform and autonomy, and on the other hand wants to preserve discipline and order in daily life, once again manifesting their dualistic attitude. The argument that NMC members are progressive is only applicable in a narrow sense, that is, in political-economic domains. Such an argument cannot be extended to other sectors.

Company Life

Finally, I analyzed NMC members' attitudes in their workplaces, in which they spend most of their time.¹⁵ Table 7 is results of an ANOVA analysis of company life of the NMC.

Table 7 presents NMC members' attitudes about authority in company organization and collectivism. The data show that they tend to accept the power of authority. In addition to that they still conserve a significant degree of collective consciousness.

TABLE 7. COMPARISON OF THE NMC'S ATTITUDE ABOUT AUTHORITY AND COLLECTIVISM
(N = 750)

Items compared	MC	JM	NN	MJ	Average	F.	Sig.
Compliance with authority in organization	39	24	30	20	27	5.5178	0.00
Collectivism in work	34	30	27	28	29	0.8306	0.48

* The score ranges from the lowest -100 to the highest 100. Scores above 0 mean that respondents comply with authority and advocate collectivism.

This means that, despite the rapid spreading of individualism, the NMC members in big corporations still prefer collectivism to individualism and they also have a respect for authority. According to this survey, NMC members choose collectivism rather than individualism, compliance to authority rather than resistance, sacrifice to organization rather than individual success, altru-

¹⁴Respondents' appraisal of traditional ethics and education does not reflect their economic status or class identification. They seem quite sensitive to issues on sex, education or age. See Park (1992).

¹⁵Questions are as follows:

"It is natural to comply with higher authority."

"Goals of the whole department are more important than the individual."

ism rather than egoism. No significant difference exists among groups in such tendencies.¹⁶

DISCUSSION

In this study, I analyzed the NMC's attitudes and differences among their subjective class identification. The outcome of this study lays the foundation for a rationale to raise questions about previous interpretations of the NMC's attitudes.

It has been observed that respondents who have middle class consciousness showed a consistent conservativeness in almost every category. On the contrary, respondents with the *minjung* consciousness was most critical in political and social attitudes. On the other hand, the *jungmin* groups had no distinguishable identity in political terms. It became clear that the *jungmin*'s attitude and value system cannot be so easily identified with those of the *minjung* group. More frequently, the *jungmin* group showed closer affinity with the middle class rather than with the *minjung* group. The *jungmin*'s self-image is more closely linked with that of the middle class. The *jungmin* group is in a 'transitory' state of social integration. There is no credible evidence that they pursue a radical change in company with the *minjung*. It would rather be a more accurate interpretation that the *jungmin* group is located at some point of metamorphosis process toward the middle class.

Such results make us raise a serious question regarding the thesis that the NMC in Korea is one of the most progressive social forces, and an active alliance between the MJ and the JM not only possible but also that the JM can be a center of progressive social change. The so-called empirical studies of the middle class so far have gone too far and have somewhat exaggerated its progressive attitudes.

The progressive character of the NMC needs to be reinterpreted. The consciousness of the NMC members are multidimensional, selective, and dualistic. The dualistic character of the NMC stands out especially in the difference between its socio-political consciousness and its everyday life value systems.¹⁷

Politically progressive and critical, the NMC members want to conserve traditional values in their daily lives. Their attitudes do not have anything to

¹⁶For more detailed information, see Park (1992).

¹⁷Analysis of value system and attitude shows some important cleavage structure in the NMC's social consciousness. First, in the economic domain, differences of attitudes among the NMC are mainly determined by their relative position within the hierarchy of company organization.

CUMULATIVE INDEX

Korea Journal of Population and Development, Volumes 19-21 (1990-1992)
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ARTICLES

- CHANG, EDWARD T., Building Minority Coalitions: A Case Study of Korean and African Americans, 21 (1): 37-56.
- CHANG, KYUNG-SUP, Economic Development with Limited Supplies of Family Labor: Chinese Peasant Families in Balancing Demographic and Economic Requisites, 20 (1): 47-76.
- CHO, CHEUNG-MOON, The Comparative Study of Inheritance among Korean Americans and Koreans, 19 (2): 201-219.
- CHUNG, SUNG-HO, Determinants of Fertility Control in Korea, 19 (1): 27-46.
- CRITTENDEN, KATHLEEN S., See LEE, MEE SOOK.
- EU, HONGSOOK, Health Status and Social and Demographic Determinants of Living Arrangements among the Korean Elderly, 21 (2): 197-224.
- HAHM, INHEE, The Effects of Economic Development and World-System on Occupational Sex Segregation, 20 (2): 17-39.
- HONG, DOO-SEUNG, Spatial Distribution of the Middle Classes in Seoul, 1975-1985, 21 (1): 73-83.
- HONG, DOO-SEUNG, See PARK, YOUNG JIN.
- JUN, KWANG HEE, See KWON, TAI-HWAN.
- KANG, HEE-KYUNG, Capital Accumulation and the Spatial Division of Classes: with Special Reference to the New Middle Class in Korea and Taiwan, 20 (1): 101-119.
- KIM, HYUNJU, Gender Role Equity and Marital Satisfaction among Korean Couples 21 (2): 99-120
- KIM, HYUN SOOK, The Post-1965 Korean Immigrants: Their Characteristics and Settlement Patterns, 21 (2): 121-144.
- KIM, JAE-ON, See LEE, MYOUNG-JIN.
- KIM, JUNG SUN, Sex Role Effects on Female Response to Illness, 19 (2): 135-155.
- KIM, KYONG-DONG, Radioactive Waste Disposal as a Social Issue, 20 (2): 49-57.
- KIM, YOUN-SUK, Korea's Technology Policy for Industrialization: Imported Technology for Economic Development, 21 (1): 85-98.
- KWON, TAI-HWAN, Rural-Urban Migration and the Social Mobility of Individuals in the Republic of Korea: An Analysis of Life History Data, 19 (2): 113-134.
- LEE, BUN SONG, The Effects of Income Level, Income Distribution, Education and Urbanization on Fertility Rates among 28 Administrative Regions of China, 19 (1): 91-111.
- LEE, DANIEL BOO DUCK, Divided Korean Families: Why does It Take So Long To Remedy the Unhealed Wounds?, 21 (2): 145-174.
- LEE, MEE SOOK, Social Origins of Psychological Well-being among Older Korean Immigrants, 19 (2): 157-176.
- LEE, MYOUNG-JIN, The Determinants of Earnings of Korean Immigrants in the United

ism rather than egoism. No significant difference exists among groups in such tendencies.¹⁶

DISCUSSION

In this study, I analyzed the NMC's attitudes and differences among their subjective class identification. The outcome of this study lays the foundation for a rationale to raise questions about previous interpretations of the NMC's attitudes.

It has been observed that respondents who have middle class consciousness showed a consistent conservativeness in almost every category. On the contrary, respondents with the *minjung* consciousness was most critical in political and social attitudes. On the other hand, the *jungmin* groups had no distinguishable identity in political terms. It became clear that the *jungmin*'s attitude and value system cannot be so easily identified with those of the *minjung* group. More frequently, the *jungmin* group showed closer affinity with the middle class rather than with the *minjung* group. The *jungmin*'s self-image is more closely linked with that of the middle class. The *jungmin* group is in a 'transitory' state of social integration. There is no credible evidence that they pursue a radical change in company with the *minjung*. It would rather be a more accurate interpretation that the *jungmin* group is located at some point of metamorphosis process toward the middle class.

Such results make us raise a serious question regarding the thesis that the NMC in Korea is one of the most progressive social forces, and an active alliance between the MJ and the JM not only possible but also that the JM can be a center of progressive social change. The so-called empirical studies of the middle class so far have gone too far and have somewhat exaggerated its progressive attitudes.

The progressive character of the NMC needs to be reinterpreted. The consciousness of the NMC members are multidimensional, selective, and dualistic. The dualistic character of the NMC stands out especially in the difference between its socio-political consciousness and its everyday life value systems.¹⁷

Politically progressive and critical, the NMC members want to conserve traditional values in their daily lives. Their attitudes do not have anything to

¹⁶For more detailed information, see Park (1992).

¹⁷Analysis of value system and attitude shows some important cleavage structure in the NMC's social consciousness. First, in the economic domain, differences of attitudes among the NMC are mainly determined by their relative position within the hierarchy of company organization.

do with their subjective class identification. And despite the rapid spreading of individualism, the NMC members prefer collectivism to individualism and they also have a respect for authority. On the one hand, they advocate political reform and autonomy, and on the other hand, emphasize discipline and order in their daily lives, making clear their dualistic attitude. The argument that NMC members are progressive is only applicable in a narrow sense.

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Second, in the aspects of political choice or interest representation, regional background of respondents plays a principal function. Third, in the realm of sex roles, traditional values, education, cultural differences according to sex and age are more important. To summarize the NMC's ideological orientation and value system, we can see each cleavage axis generates differences among groups. For a more detailed information about this, see Park (1992).

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CUMULATIVE INDEX

Korea Journal of Population and Development, Volumes 19-21 (1990-1992)
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ARTICLES

- CHANG, EDWARD T., Building Minority Coalitions: A Case Study of Korean and African Americans, 21 (1): 37-56.
- CHANG, KYUNG-SUP, Economic Development with Limited Supplies of Family Labor: Chinese Peasant Families in Balancing Demographic and Economic Requisites, 20 (1): 47-76.
- CHO, CHEUNG-MOON, The Comparative Study of Inheritance among Korean Americans and Koreans, 19 (2): 201-219.
- CHUNG, SUNG-HO, Determinants of Fertility Control in Korea, 19 (1): 27-46.
- CRITTENDEN, KATHLEEN S., See LEE, MEE SOOK.
- EU, HONGSOOK, Health Status and Social and Demographic Determinants of Living Arrangements among the Korean Elderly, 21 (2): 197-224.
- HAHM, INHEE, The Effects of Economic Development and World-System on Occupational Sex Segregation, 20 (2): 17-39.
- HONG, DOO-SEUNG, Spatial Distribution of the Middle Classes in Seoul, 1975-1985, 21 (1): 73-83.
- HONG, DOO-SEUNG, See PARK, YOUNG JIN.
- JUN, KWANG HEE, See KWON, TAI-HWAN.
- KANG, HEE-KYUNG, Capital Accumulation and the Spatial Division of Classes: with Special Reference to the New Middle Class in Korea and Taiwan, 20 (1): 101-119.
- KIM, HYUNJU, Gender Role Equity and Marital Satisfaction among Korean Couples 21 (2): 99-120
- KIM, HYUN SOOK, The Post-1965 Korean Immigrants: Their Characteristics and Settlement Patterns, 21 (2): 121-144.
- KIM, JAE-ON, See LEE, MYOUNG-JIN.
- KIM, JUNG SUN, Sex Role Effects on Female Response to Illness, 19 (2): 135-155.
- KIM, KYONG-DONG, Radioactive Waste Disposal as a Social Issue, 20 (2): 49-57.
- KIM, YOUN-SUK, Korea's Technology Policy for Industrialization: Imported Technology for Economic Development, 21 (1): 85-98.
- KWON, TAI-HWAN, Rural-Urban Migration and the Social Mobility of Individuals in the Republic of Korea: An Analysis of Life History Data, 19 (2): 113-134.
- LEE, BUN SONG, The Effects of Income Level, Income Distribution, Education and Urbanization on Fertility Rates among 28 Administrative Regions of China, 19 (1): 91-111.
- LEE, DANIEL BOO DUCK, Divided Korean Families: Why does It Take So Long To Remedy the Unhealed Wounds?, 21 (2): 145-174.
- LEE, MEE SOOK, Social Origins of Psychological Well-being among Older Korean Immigrants, 19 (2): 157-176.
- LEE, MYOUNG-JIN, The Determinants of Earnings of Korean Immigrants in the United

- States, 29 (1): 1-21.
- LEE, SOOK-JONG, Political Liberalization and Economic Development in South Korea, 20 (1): 77-100.
- LEE, SUNI, See PARK, YOUNG JIN.
- MIN, MAL-SOON, Growth of Small and Intermediate Cities in Korea, 1975-1980, 19 (1): 47-70.
- MIN, PYONG GAP, Korean Immigrant Wives' Overwork, 21 (1): 23-36.
- MIN, PYONG GAP, See KIM, HYUN SOOK.
- OHN, MAHN-GEUM, Modernization, Social Cleavage, and Political Integration, 21 (1): 1-22.
- PARK, CHUNGSUN, Sex-Role Attitudes and Employment Status as Predictors of Perceived Life Satisfaction among Married Women in Korea, 20 (1): 23-45.
- PARK, HYUNJUNG, Demographic and Socioeconomic Characteristics of Korean Americans in the United States in 1980, 19 (2): 177-199.
- PARK, JEONG-HEE, Exploring an Analytic Model of Urban Housing Strata, 21 (1): 57-72.
- PARK, MEE-HAE, Patterns of Trends of Educational Mating in Korea, 20 (2): 1-15.
- PARK, YOUNG JIN, Korean Patterns of Women's Labor Force Participation during the Period, 1960-1980, 19 (1): 71-90.
- PARK, YOUNG JIN, Perceived Dangers of Nuclear Power: Results from a Recent Social Survey, 20 (2): 59-76.
- SONG, HO KEUN, State and Economic Segmentation: Analysis of Effects of Export-Promotion Strategy on Wage Differentials in Korea's Manufacturing Industries, 19 (1): 1-26.
- SONG, YOUNG IN, Life Satisfaction of the Korean American Elderly from a Sociopsychological Analysis, 21 (2): 225-242.
- SØRENSEN, AAGE B., See SONG, HO KEUN.
- SUH, MEE KYUNG, The Elderly Population in Korea: Their Health Status and Kin-based Social Support, 21 (2): 175-196.

RESEARCH NOTES

- NAM, SUNGHEE, Family Planning Practice and Women's Fertility Decision-Making Power, 20 (2): 41-48.
- PARK, JOON-SHIK, Social Attitudes of Korea's New Middle Class: Focusing on the White Collar Workers of Big Companies, 21 (2): 243-257.